

# Theory, Reality and Recruitment

JOHN R. SEELEY  
Charles R. Drew Medical School  
and UCLA

It is probably no accident that the series of lectures we open here tonight—"Troubled Times, Troubled Minds: Alienation and Mental Health"—finds itself sandwiched in the UCLA Extension Bulletin, which is a sort of intellectual stock-offering, cultural company prospectus, a get-rich-quick scheme, between another series called "Aftershocks of Crisis: Where to From Here?" and yet another called "Human Sexuality." (Human Sexuality, they say, in case you missed it, began last night.)

The Aftershocks series deals with such unpleasantness and externalia as Crime in the Suites, Campaign Financing, the Stock Market and The Burger Court (a fine set of distinctions between a variety of public citizen skin-games!). The Sexuality series deals, on the other hand, as it were, with such delights and internalia as touch, masturbation, fears, fantasies, homosexuality, "deviations," and "variations," and, roughly, the gentler, smaller, contact sports, single-handed, generally, or for mixed or unmixed doubles.

The terms of our title require us to reach both further out and further in. They are much larger and wider. They ask us to bridge in understanding those giant explosive events that take place on the cosmological-evolutionary stage that we call history, or "our times," and the correspondingly drastic implosive events in the microcosm that apprehends the macrocosm, "our minds." Both are said, in a masterly understatement in the brochure, to be "troubled!"

I say that it is probably no accident that these offerings appear thus, because they do represent rather well three of the four characteristic thrusts for remediation dictated by or derived from our desperate dis-ease: the dis-ease that is for the well or the sane, both the sign and the price (while perhaps also the destroyer) of their sanity.

One of these characteristic thrusts reaches toward the micro-cosmic; one, a little timidly, toward the macrocosmic; and the other, as I have said, toward a bridge over both troubled waters. All that I find strange in the juxtaposed offerings is two things: an omission that I shall come to presently, and a curiously disjunct way of treating the other two topics in our sister series.

On the second point, for instance, I find it strange and striking (and a far degeneration from what a Freud, or even a Freudian progenitor would have suggested) that sexuality should be

treated as other than the very hub of the wheel of the psyche and hence the culture, the society, the polity, and finally the cosmos. And I find it equally strange and striking (and a far degeneration from what a Marx or even a Marxian progenitor would have suggested), that large-scale political questions are treated on a plane where their focal function in the formation, information, misinformation, deformation, and falsification of consciousness including deepest unconscious, is seemingly not surfaced nor, itself, clearly made the crucial criterion of critique. Strange indeed.

Also strange and significant seems the omission, given the weight of the movement within the culture (omitting streaking as an emergent but not fully emerged national movement)—the omission of a series directly addressed to the religious, the spiritual, the numinous, the transcendent, the ultra-mundane, the mythic and, in one sense, the magic, the capital of the Magi, the wise ones, those knowledgeable in the knowledge that is not of the mundane world in scope or provenance: the non-psychopathology of non-everyday life.

For I think you will recognize that this tetrad would rightly represent the range of offerings put before today's frantic seekers after salvation, salvation personal or salvation collective, in what is so understatedly called here these "troubled times"—one might better have said, perhaps, these times of close-pressing apocalypse, in every realm, sphere or dimension.

In its sophisticated form, of course, no one of the approaches excludes the other; each claims merely to be the crux of the problem, the *sine qua non* for any issue, let alone any happy issue, out of all our afflictions, the obviously indicated first front for attack, the prime program into which to put and from which to draw such energies as at first we have, and, as we go, we hopefully develop.

The first doctrine makes focal the bio-psychosexual identity and function, that which flows into and out of that smallest, most intimate, one might almost say intra-dermal and peridermal core of the social atom, which is, put one way, the person-in-his-primary-relation, or, put the other, the primary group in its person-engendering, person-reforming, person-maintaining, person-destroying function.

The second doctrine makes focal the broadest cultural bounds, the most powerful social and

institutional arrangements, within which or on the base of which, in this view, the very definitions and deeds and redefinitions of intimacy are decided, as the very conditions under which primary relations arise, are shaped, live, languish, die, or endure. (Love in a cold climate with maldistributed coal, could indeed make family mean things quite different to the chilled and the warmed, the rich and the poor. As between them, even the age at first erection, penile or clitoral, or the first pleasurable sexually located experience, would likely correlate closely thus with politico-economic class, or the gradient of the real tax structure; and hence the very views of what was natural or permissible or normative in sexual behavior be rooted in the vicissitudes of birth into warm house or cold hut.)

There are, it is true, two variants, crudely, of the call to focus here thus on the political as the prime consideration: a conservative call for social carpentry in select spots, in a real order which is taken as being sufficiently close to any practical ideal as to need no more than patching; and a non-conservative variant, sometimes proudly, sometimes invidiously labelled "radical," bidding us not to waste effort in futile carpentry of the existing social edifice, but to tear down the greater part of the rotting fabric, reconstitute it in far other architecture on quite other principles, and ultimately rebuild it on new foundations. (The British Conservatives, the present leaders of the Soviet Union, Mr. Nixon and the general spirit of our adjunct lecture series represent rather well the carpenters—or perhaps as I should have better said, following Watergate, the social plumbers—plumbers not in the true meaning of "those who reach deep," but in the Nixonian sense of those who think roughly that society is to be saved by the prevention or stoppage of out-of-channel leaks, somewhat in analogy with the Victorian parental view that the soul was to be saved by the prevention or stoppage of out-of-channel seminal emissions. Where we may not look for a radical (or even non-conservative) version of this profession, is now a difficult question.)

The third proposed focus-of-foci, is, as indicated, on the relation to the ineffable and transcendent, the One, the Nameless, the non-dual, the very medium in which we are in our Being; on that which, recognized or not, as beings, is in us, our infused essence, our origin and end; in any case, that which, on one version is the all-in-all, the pearl of great price for which man, enlightened, will give up all else, or, on the other version, that which alone (as necessary and sufficient) allows alike the subjective and objective transformation and transfiguration of the person and the world. Whether posed (as in Jungian doctrine and practice) as the discovery and individuation of the Self, and the relocation of the mere and relatively pitiful ego within its grander context; or as the problem of finding the Path

at the moment you recognize you are already in it; or as that of recognizing the god, immediately immanent while awesomely transcendent—the recognition, the knowledge, inseparable from gratitude, joy and rebirth into full "new life;" or again as the attainment of Satori or Samadhi; or as the dawning into full awareness "that all you lack is the realization that you lack nothing," or again posed as the problem of surrender and the fall into grace—however posed (and the differences in posing are not unimportant), this also at least imperial scheme lays claim to allegiance, and, commonly, under the law against idolatry, first or exclusive allegiance.

And then our own attempt here constitutes the fourth: an attempt not only to relate these gospels, but to claim some sufficient importance for such a synopsis, as to make the pains of achieving it loom small beside the attendant gains.

We may seem to be attempting the impossible—for what I shall say of the social and the psychological, presupposes, takes its meaning from, and in some sense organizes a world of *struggle*, a world in which desire and our dealings with desire are the very source of all theory and the very stuff of all practice. So we may find it hard to reconcile either of these two perspectives with that third focus which puts first the extinction of desire—or its fulfillment in such fashion that the ordinary world of desire is as nothing, i.e., not except perhaps as symbol, to be desired. The first two views originate in and, at their best, order struggle, or otherwise affect it or render it comprehensible. The third says in some sense that struggle—or that sort of struggle—is itself at or near the source of all illusion, suffering and pain, the self-nourishing seed of eternally more, self- and situation stultifying struggle.

Let us begin with the first two and then see what we can do with the third.

I cannot begin a discussion of any particular theory without postulating at least two meta-theoretical propositions—propositions in a theory about theories.

One, I have already indicated: theory (a supposed cognitive structure) arises out of, flows back into, exists in, is an aspect of, an active, passionate (affective) and wilful (conative) attempt to secure one outcome rather than another in an external or internal world, i.e., for want of a better term, a more-or-less all-out *struggle*. (There is no theory about what is indifferent, except in so far as we are not indifferent to indifference.) Theory is thus—or to put it another way—only an ingredient in action, at least at first appearance, *is* aggression, a struggle to secure something or ensure its absence. Even theory-for-its-own-sake (as an individual practice, not a social institution) is, like smoking or drinking or dancing, an activity in the service of a certain state of mind, having heavy weightings in tranquility and wonder, but struggled for earnestly

nevertheless, against alternative duties, dispositions and desires. Even theories of desirelessness are in the service of desire-laden struggle; and the escape, if there is one, is when the theory, having served its purpose like scaffolding, falls away, leaving only the state of desirelessness without theory or comment. But even this state lies, at least for us, on the farther side of struggle-borne theory: no motive to cease struggling precedes struggle, followed by the perception, in some frame of reference, of struggle's futility. Futility is, itself, however, a term taken from the vocabulary of struggle: it refers to the quality of not yielding desiderata—which presupposes desire and desireables. So my first metatheoretical postulate is that theory (especially in its transcendent or essential nature) is an aspect of practice, of struggle, of *praxis*.

The second postulate, differentiating humans (and just possibly other animate forms) from the rest of all that is, is that the humans themselves, we, us, *are* in large part theory, the very theory we hold about ourselves. This view must have limits, but I do not know where they lie. And I also do not know how to communicate the implication of the view with sufficient force unless you already realize it. I am, to a degree difficult to appreciate, a supposition about myself—a mere supposition—one, moreover largely resting on faith, such that the “evidence” (indeed the capacity to constitute it, evaluate it *as* evidence, indeed deal with such evidence at all) follows, and follows essentially from the first faith that accredits the bundle of events, that I theorize into me, into a personality. What happens when this fidefactual practice is wanting is obvious: anyone who has dealt clinically with an otherwise potential and sometime actual human who is deeply involved in a process of depersonalization will know what I mean. And depersonalization is merely a faltering in the fidefactual process: for some reason, or in some process, at some radical level, the substantial identification of I with me, or me with mine (me and my body, for instance)—mere accreditations, I point out, of the same sort that give you belief or disbelief in the “value” of gold or credit or paper money—that faith-based and faith-constituted identification falls apart, first for that person's self and subsequently for others. Such continuity and coherence as normally sustain the myth of that person, failing for some reason the activity (the “accounting” or “representation”) that defines the continuity and coherence, an activity, in turn, grounded in and furnishing the faith that by supposition makes it so, fail. And, with that failure, that which was a person ceases to that degree, except potentially, to be such. We must turn later to the sources and nature of such faith.

And as I am in large part a supposition about myself—not merely the “creation” of my myth, since the myth, and the myth-maker and the subject of the myth are one—so are you largely

mere ambulatory suppositions about yourselves.

And to the degree that we form a society at all, even a superficial and temporary and local society, such as this one, here, tonight, the degree, form and quality of that society is, up to some limit difficult to define, merely the woven web of the theories we have of each other: so that, here, as elsewhere, minds, selves and societies, are, in George Herbert Mead's terse and happy term, co-emergents. Co-emergents, and I would add, co-constituents. We are each, in effect, very largely what all of the others relevant, define us to be, as those definitions enter into and flow out of our self-suppositions, in one meaning, our very selves. But, if that is true, you may ask Who or what is the defining agent?: who is the second I in the (truncated) formula “I am what I suppose myself to be!”? Ah, well asked! That I, supposing, is the I supposed of the just preceding instant; and the I now, in the eternal instant, supposed, will in the next instant be another I supposing of another I supposed. So that at a minimum the I, except at an instant—or, of course, the you—is an endless generative process, a whole high-speed evolutionary process, a whole line of descent, having just that continuity-discontinuity, alternately an entity-in-transmission and a process-in-precipitation, in some sense analogical with a movie film, now seen as successive frames generated out of each other, now seen as a flow of motion, snapshot barely or not at all perceptible.

I must now add something to what I said about society. I said earlier that such society as we have is a society constituted as to quality and determined as to degree by the suppositions or theories we have about ourselves and each other. While true so far as it goes, society is more than that, because we have also suppositions—theories—about society. And with society, as with persons, the theory, belief, faith or supposition is neither outside nor really in any ordinary sense “about” society: it is, in fact, in large part, what we mean by the society and what it therefore, in effect, *is*. I could repeat, in analogy with what I said about the supposing I and the I supposed, a dictum that today's society *is* largely yesterday's sociology.

At this point, I begin to fear that I have made it sound as though the whole matter of self and society were purely “voluntaristic” or a matter of radical subjectivism. If so, I have conveyed an exaggerated impression on at least two counts. On the first count, the fund of means and materials out of which to form or fashion achievable and tenable faiths, for any one person or people at any one time, has itself a history of development, so that even what is or can be suggested to the imagination, the fund of figures, metaphors, imaginings, basic myths (and even filligree thereon and plot therein), though generous at any instant and increasable over time, is nevertheless not infinite. Nor are other human dispositions,

though affected by the faith, inoperative upon it. On the second count, the faith, while it is not determined by the objective, by what objects under certain formulations, in order to function cannot float wholly free of the objective. Conceiving oneself and being defined as an entrepreneur can indeed go far to make one entrepreneurial; but the figure or the makings of the figure must be in some sense there, actually or virtually, for the mind to seize upon; and (confirmation by others apart) there must be "objectively" in the social and material existent *some* room for entrepreneurial operations, and even support for such faith and works.

Since, as I suggested earlier, theory is an outcome of as well as a weapon or instrument in struggle, both with reference to theories of person and society and their constitutive effect on both, it is timely, perhaps, to turn our attention to this key term.

There is a sense in which we might take struggle as a given, as a primitive term, since however, wherever and whenever we come upon humans—coming upon, i.e., becoming conscious, each of us of ourselves, included—they are already not only so engaged, but so deeply engaged, that what is not struggle (if it exists) is dramatically marginal. Do not let the obliqueness of the path or the indirection of the effort blind you to the deeper connections. High school football, feeding and grooming, sex and worship, even "relaxing," are all, except intermittently and rarely, under the sign of struggle. Indeed, so clearly so, that Philip Rieff coins for them the term "remissory experiences"—on the well-taken analogy of "breathers" introduced between rounds to heighten the degree and effectiveness of fight.

It is important, however, to distinguish "necessary" from "free" struggle. Necessary struggle here implies whatever is implied in the argument itself, whatever is "internally" indispensable to the capacity of the person to theorize at all, and "externally" to the existence of a society to theorize "to," "with," "for." Such struggles of necessity commit persons and societies, for instance, beyond what may be necessary for some animal survival for some species-members in some degree, to certain more or less sustained efforts to create and maintain integrating functions, such as, for instance, sharing in and using a language to a degree common, acting in a fashion such as to satisfy certain expectation-minima, perhaps finding, within and between persons, means of resolving unavoidable conflicts short of total disruption. Beyond this, in a very particular sense, all struggle—whether to make music, build cathedrals, proliferate "commodities," elaborate thought-schemes or beliefs, promote war, differentiate roles or individualities—may, in at least one special sense—the sense indicated—be held to be struggles, but struggles in the realm of freedom. They are not in the realm of freedom, in many cases, in the sense

that once they have been taken on by one's own society or another, a lone person or one society may opt out and survive (personal refusal to wage war or national disarmament may, under certain conditions, not be options not to engage in those struggles). They are not in the realm of freedom, for persons and groups, in a "given" society, in the sense that terrible penalties may be exacted for refusal to engage in the required struggle (e.g., learning to read, or, latterly, to sit unnaturally still). But they are in the realm of freedom in principle, even if not in practice at a given historic moment, as is evidenced by the recent disappearance of the requirement that proper young ladies swoon appropriately, gentlemen doff hats, or even, more recently, that the two sexes continuously signal their gender-based identity by a series of blatant, unmistakable, virtually unblinkable signs and signals. There is one more sense in which such struggles are not in the realm of freedom, and that is the sense in which ends entail means, or certain minimum degrees of coherence are required for operability. Thus freely to choose unlimited territorial conquest as an item on the agenda of struggle is to choose a great deal with it, from the allocation of resources, the allocation of roles, to the fostering of some beliefs at the expense of others, to self-image and self-shaping, to, in some sense, a choice between theologies or god-terms, perhaps even to patterns of selective mating, and the distribution of items respectively into the conscious and unconscious, personal and collective.

But the most fundamental point remains. Beyond whatever it is that sustains and has sustained, say, the surviving aboriginal societies of Australia to the present day, all other "necessity" and "struggle," endeavor and achievement, while appearing in the Durkheimian sense as an independent necessity of existence, a "social fact," is on the contrary, no more so (at least, at some crucial point) than someone's undertaking to climb Mount Everest "because it is there," or our undertaking for unexamined reasons the conquest of cancer, the exploration of space, the elaboration of cock-rock and the destruction of Indo-China.

The effect of the theory, whatever it is (forgive the sexism in the phrases)—man as the maker, *homo faber*, man as the reasoning animal, man as naturally a worker or producer, man as a demi-god a little lower only than the angels, man as evil, man as dust, man as worshipper made *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, man as consumer, man as battleground for fierce instinctual forces in conflict with each other and, together, with social demand or necessity, Hobbes' man (man the wolf), Rousseau's man, the man of the French Revolution, the British, the American, the Russian—the theory is the recruitment proposal to a particular struggle or set of struggles, cast like all good propaganda, in the form of a description, committing one as far as possible, as irrevocably

as possible, as deeply as possible, as broadly as possible to a whole connected line of thought, belief, feeling and action. And, the less explicit, the harder to reach for re-examination and review, whether within persons or between them, the more successful. At ideal point, the theoretic invention should seem to be just there, a fact of nature, or something so grounded that the very structure of the mind seems to make supposing otherwise unthinkable.

Such ultra-powerful, all-but-decisive theories, as implicit as possible, are among those mediated in infancy, implicit in the very actions and structures (neglecting the more overt messages) of the primary group. They are implicit in the very structure of the language, and in the action and organization of society, nation, state or similar fidefact, as well as in the organization of those thoughts and feelings connected with the boundless, the supreme, the awesome, the omegoid that, when explicit and organized we call a theology. Taken together, they both embroil the person in a set of particular struggles, embody, incarnate, institute certain struggles "within" him or her (and *as* her or him), and structure the drives, motives, beliefs, thought-systems, and the necessary functions, prunings, clippings, twistings, that make it difficult to see the chosen in any light except that of the only or inevitable.

When we come to formal and explicit theorizing (a great deal of it masquerading as fact-reporting, despite the well-known fact that a fact is not self-constituting, but is only in reference to a theory and, hence, a purpose)—when we come to such theorizing, we may clearly, I believe, make important distinctions between two kinds of effects (more or less loosely corresponding to the same intents) and three quite important sets of limitations.

Let me deal with the limitations first. The most obvious of these lies in the nature—the psychological, cognitive and non-cognitive, conscious and, more importantly, unconscious make-up—the social position, origin and hoped-for-destination of the theorizer. In most of the matters that matter most—the means and meanings of mental health, the resources of mind, the nature of society, the criteria for credibility—what will be described as possible, let alone mapped or plausibility-tested—is itself bounded by the standing of the theorizer, not as a knower-about but a be-er, in the matter at hand. As only a holy man can advance further into the knowledge (and inseparably-associated love and incarnation) of the holy, so, despite contrary holdings derived from the physical sciences, theoreticians of man and society are *in their whole natures* their own principal assets and liabilities, in their theorizing. It is not quite true, but close enough, to say that anal characters elaborate anal theories—or, by reaction-formation, theories having opposite form, but, curiously, the same effect. So at most and best such

theorizing—barring some effective devices to the contrary—edges out a little, a very shadow of a shadow's breadth, out from history and autobiography, toward more dark or light, as that vector, that line of direction may happen to lie.

The second limitation lies in the politico-economic-social structure of the theorizing industry. For it is not only now an industry, but a dependent and capital-intensive industry, manned and womanned by the poorest people on earth. The poorest people on earth are those who have been formed or induced to want and expect a great deal in material and honorific emolument, who have those expectations continuously dangled before them, together with a nearly maximally effective reinforcement-schedule, whose self-respect is tied to victory or all-out struggle, and their operability to that self-respect. (This is partly what makes academic politics so seedy, bitter, petty, and the virtual mirror-image of the academy's indispensable self image.) In any case competitive success in the competitive industry, depends on nothing so much as distinction, and distinction depends here, as in the clothing industry, principally on mere novelty, innovation, the ability to institute a new fashion in the absence of any showing of anything wrong with the old. Hence, theories tend to succeed theories, not because older ones have run out, but because adding to them is no longer striking, attention-getting and career-promoting. This stricture adds a randomizing effect to the theorizing—so that the connections between successive theories are more like those between panty-raids, gold-fish swallowing, telephone-booth packing, and streaking—than, say, successive stages in the serious side of the sexual liberation movement. Novelty sells (especially when added to utility) in the theory industry, as in the child-raising industry, as now indeed, in the new growth-industry, the intimacy industry.

The third limitation has to do with theory-marketability. Again the market here is becoming much like other markets. The élite-in-position, whose stock-in-trade is their theory (once itself a mere precarious candidate in the market) oppose not only the newcomers but, of late, there have arrived conscious, high-powered marketers in the literal sense (P. R. men, and ad-men, and agents and advance men and their equivalents). McLuhan's media-praising and technology-prostrate theories were marketed like mad—or like sane, from the media viewpoint. (If the medium were the message, then in what sense would the media not be self-sufficient?) And such equally serviceable theories, as Lipset's end-of-ideology ideology—an attempt to set power free from confrontation with truth, to create the administered person, polity, and theory—were successfully peddled, like the earlier legend or vulgarized version of value-free social science.

Within these limitations, theories are certainly in effect, and often in intent, broadly to be

distinguished as liberative or counter-liberative. At this point we must connect again with the concrete situation (which is always for everyone at every turn the intercept between history and life-history). Theory—though admittedly by entering into belief it constrains or energizes purpose—is liberative or counter-liberative, not in relation to itself, but in relation to purposive action “out there,” by persons and social elements seeking to move along the paths of universal liberation by freeing themselves to free others. In the last decade, for instance, in many places student movements and youth movements, were at least momentarily in the vanguard of freedom, not solely or primarily for themselves alone or their countries or classes of origin. Many of them did their own theorizing, and some of it not to bad effect. Among professional theorists, all the phenomena I referred to above manifested themselves. All theorists exhibited their strengths and weaknesses in terms of what they were (psychologically and socially), the interests they consciously or unconsciously served, the primitive psychodramas in their own lives that the student behavior agitated into blind replay, and their basic liberative or counter-liberative identifications and intents.

These defects and dangers apart, some of the most important questions that affect our lives seem almost beyond theoretical examination—either the assumptions we make but can barely see, or the very limits of the language we use, seem to put the questions outside the realm of theoretical treatment altogether. Nearly all theory, nearly all science, nearly all knowledge, for instance, is in the service of “control.” At some point we come out with whole would-be sciences of other-control, or even, in some incomprehensible meaning, of “self-control.” Except in the rarest of instances—keeping an infant from running onto a traffic-swept freeway, for instance—I cannot, when I reflect at all, regard the control of others (their thoughts, acts, feelings, beliefs, styles, individualities) as something at all to be desired. A person I fully control is my slave or worse, a psychic corpse, the victim of my psychocide. And, with a corpse, intercourse seems, *prima facie*, not attractive. But how are things better if the controller is I, and the controlled, me? For even if I—what does “I” mean here?—mean the control of my feelings by my intellect, or my action by my thoughts, or the control of several of my selves by one of them, why should I prefer this autocracy to a democracy within me, this “subordination” of a part to another part? I am not even sure such programs have even a *logical* meaning (neglecting now, feasibility). Many of the terms probably have only a dialectical standing (like North Pole and South Pole, conceptually inseparable because co-constitutive). If the I and the me are relational or dialectical terms in an internal conversation, then the superordination of the I, the me, or

the conversation is in fact the dissolution of all three.

The same sorts of problems arise in trying to think about the appropriate relation—again, in our area, taken for granted—between “me” and “my environment.” To begin with, it is altogether unclear that a term such as “I” has a spatial referent at all, and, of course, if it does not have a spatial referent, it cannot in any intelligible sense, have an “environment.” (Some people even speak of someone’s social environment!) If I do have a spatial referent, where am I? Is my body (even though “mine”) “me” or “in my environment?” Where *is* the I that is dreaming that it is in Palestine—or Paradise? When Christ said “I am in my Father, as my Father is in Me,” was he not stating, as well as a point in theology, a commonplace of experience. And, if so, the problem—whatever it is—cannot be properly stated or theorized about in terms so improper to it. I *can* wantonly conceive an I that destroys or pollutes its environment—if only because it has so distinguished, cut off, the environment from itself. But it is no necessity—apart from control gone mad as purpose. And yet few theories escape it as assumption—above all because the theorizer has already conceived (and elaborated and defended and armored and burdened to breaking) an I so exaggeratedly disjunct from the non-I, that what he holds himself to be doing even while theorizing, can only lead to the kind of theory dubiously certain for control but certainly useless for all else.

“Apathy, frustration, loneliness and despair” indeed relate to the personal and social theories within which we live. It is not so much, I think, that our society is “plagued by inflation, crime, political scandals, inequities, war and racial conflict.” It is that “our society”—either meaning, or certainly anchored in, our conception of ourselves-in-relation—is those things in action. They are not “attendant evils,” but flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, as clearly and dearly and intrinsically ours as the voyage out to space or in to Buchenwald and Auschwitz. That narrowed ego, usurping all the space of the cosmos-reflecting, cosmos-inclusive, cosmos-included self, *defines itself* by its alienation, by its utter othering; and thus, having made possible the distantiation required for “control,” it cannot deal with familiarity with what it has (together with itself) cast into outer darkness.

As Trungpa Rinpoché point out—and as everyone who has tried it has experienced—what he calls “spiritual materialism,” and what, because of the point-for-point analogies I am tempted to call “spiritual capitalism,” reappears even and notably in those few exercises in which we seek to allow our sanity to return or resurface. We try to escape our shackles in the spirit in which we try to improve ourselves: we do charity in the way we bank money; selfishly, we seek,

selflessness. By sanity I mean health; and by health, wholeness or holiness. The mark of that relative wholeness lies most likely in the capacity to be fully and deeply by turns and without strain in the paradoxical poles that bound and define our being: active and passive; distinct from all else and distinct from nothing; incorporating all and by all incorporated; as specks of dust and pivots of the universe; as all but determined and as all but free makers of history; agents and patients; bounded, indeed constricted, and boundless, indeed infinite; flashes in time and sparks in light-years of deepest darkness, but suns also radiating heavens and continuities spanning eons; living in some sort in society even as society lives in us; distinct in identity, identified only with all; bound to free ourselves from the wheel of desire thus leaving the mundane world, for the sake also of the return more powerfully to change and better that world in order that all may have the luxury of the experiences that may be had when bellies are empty by choice and not because they cannot in current carelessness and injustice and alienation be simply filled. If we fast, let it be to such good effect that all may eat, that all may fast....

Let me repeat. *Do not take theory lightly.* It is not about you. It is you. It is not about society. It is society. Theories of the person and theories of society are for the most part aimed at "prediction and control." Corpses are the best examples of the predictable and

controllable. Persons and societies are emergents in their essence. That requires a different relation which requires something other than theory as we commonly understand it. Society and person are reciprocal terms, and co-constitutive realities. You are realized in a society as a society is realized in you. You *are*, each and all, in fact, in some sense, a society. But you embody more. You embody or incorporate all that exists for you, actual or virtual, as also it incorporates you. And it exists for our purposes—perhaps also for all purposes—by virtue of that dual incorporation.

What I would call us to—though as you see we have as yet no theory of it because we have no praxis of it—it is a simultaneous bettering of the self and the world (without priority except as strategy dictates) and without loss of the salvation-in-detachment because of the necessity also of action-in-attachment. The world, and we with it, are both to be bettered and let be, in passion and surrender, respectively. It is a drama—and a dance: a drama of near-heroes and near-saints wrestling the sun and the gods out of heaven to make light and life and fire for men: all men, all women, all children, always, everywhere. It is a dance, in the vastness of all space and all eternity, in which we are at once everywhere and ever-present, and mere golden specks dwarfed by, but co-constituent with the surrounding peaceful and unmoving dark.